

April 2012

## Implementing Common Core State Standards

Washington's 2008 Strategic Master Plan set an overarching goal of raising statewide educational attainment. A principal strategy to achieve this goal involved creating higher expectations for all K-12 students. Two initiatives central to this strategy, teacher professional development and college readiness, have been strengthened by continuing cross-sector collaboration.

The Transition Math project and College Readiness projects, in place at the time the master plan was developed, have helped improve our understanding of what is needed to create more successful transitions from high school to college. In part they have succeeded by bringing together faculty from high schools, two-year college, and four-year colleges to talk about curriculum and expectations.

The resulting definitions have provided new insights into the level of skills and habits of mind needed to ensure students will succeed in college and have laid a strong foundation for improved teacher professional development activities. For example, we now know that learning the subject matter alone is not enough. Students who take responsibility for their own learning, persevere through problem solving, and pay close attention to detail, gain an advantage broadly across math, science and English.<sup>1</sup>

Washington and 45 other states are pursuing what now amounts to a national movement to adopt the common core state standards in math and English language arts. But even though the new standards align well with existing standards both laterally (within the state's K-12 system) and upward (to meet college entrance requirements) more work is needed. The Common Core Standards are being phased in and will be fully implemented by the 2014-15 school year – at which time students will be assessed using a new assessment system currently in development.

Therefore, the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) has taken a lead role in developing a new partnership to win buy-in from the nearly 300 school districts the standards will impact, as well as increased support from higher education partners. The SBCTC also intends to explore ways to smooth the high school to college transition. Other partners include the Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB), Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), and the Council of Presidents (COP).

Funded through the **Core to College: Preparing Students for College Readiness and Success** grant program, the partnership aims to foster long-term collaborations between state higher education and K-12 entities that will improve student achievement and college readiness, and ultimately increased rates of enrollment and graduation.

---

<sup>1</sup> More information on College Readiness is available at <http://collegereadinesswa.org/>. Information on the transition math project can be found at: <http://www.transitionmathproject.org/>.

One key to this success is using the Common Core State Standards and assessments to establish a statewide common definition of college readiness to signal a student's preparedness for credit-bearing college courses. Having such a baseline also will inform processes to transition students successfully between high school and higher education environments.

Washington is the lead partner in the Smarter Balance Consortium, which is one of two national consortia working to develop an assessment system for the Common Core State Standards. The goal of the consortium is to develop a comprehensive assessment system by the 2014-15 school year. Pilot testing will begin next year and larger-scale field testing will begin 2013-14. The transition to new standards and a new assessment system will have important implications for professional development needs of teachers and administrators.

A natural outgrowth of the move to common standards and a common assessment system would be a better integrated and more consistent approach to professional development. While professional development funding is complicated by multiple funding streams that are targeted to specific purposes, there is a great deal of overlap, which provides opportunities for collaboration.

The HECB has partnered with OSPI on two separate projects that will hopefully become a model for continued cooperation on professional development focused on high school to college transitions.

In the first of these projects the state GEAR UP program is collaborating with OSPI to build school district capacity to support implementation of Common Core State Standards in high-needs school districts.

Through this project GEAR UP has partnered with OSPI to provide information, training, and workshops to 3-5 high-need (50 percent or more of their students qualify for free or reduced price lunches) school districts in each of the nine Educational Service District (ESDs) in Washington.

School districts will apply for a grant through a competitive process. Consideration for selection includes regional distribution, district size, and existing district capacity. The grant award amount for school districts is up to \$4,500 per district. Funding will cover substitute teachers (when necessary), travel, and a small stipend to those under a teaching contract for the summer training.

To participate, school districts will agree that:

- All team members commit to attending two, two-day trainings; one in late spring and one in August.
- During the August workshop, each district will produce or refine an implementation plan for Common Core State Standards.
- All content leaders will attend the regionally-provided content trainings.
- The school district will provide some collaborative time for school faculty learning.

## Teams:

- Each school district will create a team of 3 – 6 members.
- Each school district will determine at least one math content facilitator, at least one English Language Arts content facilitator, one building administrator and other curriculum and instruction personnel as appropriate.
- School districts are encouraged to build a team of educators with a variety of skills that may include teacher leaders, instructional coaches, principals, curriculum staff, or superintendents.

The second project combines funding from the HECB Title IIA educator professional development program, and the OSPI Math Science Partnership program. The agencies plan to jointly administer a professional development grant program focused on implementation of the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics and Next Generation Science Standards for grades 6 – 12.

The program will fund one or two professional development projects conducted by partnerships of one or more higher education institutions and one or more high-need school districts.<sup>2</sup> Projects will deliver professional development designed to prepare teachers and principals to implement the Standards to improve student achievement. Projects also may address implementation of the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts. Ideally, project partnerships will have sufficient expertise to provide integrated professional development activities that address learning standards and content knowledge across multiple districts in the state.

The mission of each funded project is to implement the *Common Core State Standards in Mathematics* and *Framework for Science Education*<sup>3</sup> for grades 6-12, in a way that accomplishes all of the following:

1. Improves teachers' subject matter knowledge in the academic subjects they teach;
2. Promotes strong teaching skills by ensuring teachers are able to use the *Common Core State Standards in Mathematics* and/or *Washington State K-12 Science Standards* to enhance their instructional practices; and
3. Improves principal/assistant principal subject matter knowledge (if appropriate) and instructional leadership skills specific to mathematics and/or science.

Contingent on the availability of federal funding, a total of up to \$1.7 million dollars may be available over three years beginning July 2012. Projects that do not address both mathematics and science would receive a reduced award. Under current federal statutes, the anticipated federal funding sources are:

- |   |           |
|---|-----------|
| ▪ No Child Left Behind Act Title II Part A Subpart 3 (HECB) | \$900,000 |
| ▪ No Child Left Behind Act Title II Part B (OSPI)           | \$800,000 |

<sup>2</sup> See the grant announcement for more information and a list of eligible districts <http://www.hecb.wa.gov/node/293>.

<sup>3</sup> National Research Council. *A Framework for K-12 Science Education: Practices, Crosscutting Concepts, and Core Ideas*.

These programs are important components of the No Child Left Behind legislation. They encourage scientifically based professional development as a means for improving student academic performance.

**Subpart 3 of Title II, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)** authorizes a competitive grant program to fund professional development partnerships between institutions of higher education and school districts.

The intent of this partnership grant program is to increase student academic achievement in core subject areas (including mathematics, science, English, and Language Arts) by enhancing classroom teachers' content knowledge and ability to use state standards to improve instructional practices; and to enhance principals' and assistant principals' content knowledge (if appropriate) and instructional leadership skills. The HECB is responsible for the administration of this program. A total of \$900,000 of the anticipated funding listed above is contingent on continued federal funding for this program.

**Title II, Part B of NCLB** authorizes a Mathematics and Science Partnership (MSP) competitive grant program to fund professional development partnerships between institutions of higher education and school districts. The intent of this partnership grant program is to increase academic achievement of students in mathematics and science by enhancing the content knowledge and teaching skills of classroom teachers. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is responsible for the administration of the MSP Program. A total of \$800,000 of the anticipated funding listed above is contingent on continued federal funding for this program.

Realizing the high degree of overlap between these Title II programs, the HECB and OSPI have agreed to jointly fund and administer a competitive grant program designed to capitalize on the similarities between the two programs. Combining funding streams in this way allows a project to accomplish more than funding under a single funding stream would allow.

For example, the federal Title II Part A Subpart 3 program provides funding for professional development designed to increase content knowledge (if appropriate) and instructional leadership skills of principals and assistant principals, whereas the federal Title II Part B program does not.

A project funded by both federal programs is able to provide professional development for both teachers and principals, provided that it tracks costs attributable to principal/assistant principal professional development separately from those attributable to teacher professional development. A project funded by both programs is also able to serve more educators than would be feasible under either program alone.

The Master Plan laid out aggressive goals for increased educational attainment in Washington that relied on improvements in the P-20 pipeline as well as other system improvements and strategic investments to support the growth of our system. The recession has resulted in a 25 percent reduction in state resources for higher education and has forced all state government to redouble efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness of every dollar spent.

Changes at the federal level also impact this work. Every indication is that the funding used to support professional development activities will move to a competitive award system. In this environment it is critical that state agencies demonstrate a willingness and ability to collaborate in the delivery of services to ensure funds are used in the most effective and efficient way.

The collaborative efforts described above may serve as a model as we go forward and a foundation for future competitive grant activities. To talk more about these efforts the board will be joined by a panel that includes representatives from OSPI, SBCTC, and HECB staff members.